United Nations Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.16/Inf.2
14 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GOVERNING COUNCIL
Sixteenth session
Nairobi, 20-31 May 1991
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

GOVERNING COUNCIL BUREAU MEETINGS WITH BUREAUX OF COUNTERPART ORGANS

Note by the Executive Director

1. By its decision 15/1, adopted on 25 May 1989, the Governing Council decided "on an experimental basis to mandate the Bureau of its fifteenth session to meet with the bureaux of the counterpart organs of the specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations to develop more positive and collaborative relations" (Section II, para. 5).

2. UNEP's main partners among the specialized agencies and United Nations organs were subsequently informed of the Council's decision and the majority (8 of 12) responded positively. A few did not find a suitable counterpart within their organization to meet with the Bureau of the fifteenth session of the Governing Council.

3. During the course of 1990, members of the Bureau of the Governing Council met with members of their counterparts in the following organizations:

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Rome on 21 February;

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in Geneva on 23 February;

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), in London on 9 March;

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in Vienna on 25 May;

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in Geneva on 29 May;

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), in Geneva on 8 June; and

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), in Paris on 12 October.

4. The discussions with the Independent Chairman of the FAO Council concentrated on the following issues: climate change and its likely impact on agriculture; water resources and forests; biodiversity; trade in chemicals; sustainable development; new technology; transfer of technology; the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme; and, in particular, Governing Council decision 15/24 on sustainable agriculture. It was agreed

that a joint FAO/UNEP meeting on sustainable agriculture should take place before the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. It was proposed that the 1977 memorandum of understanding governing the relations between UNEP and FAO be revised, preferably after the results of the 1992 Conference were known. FAO pointed out that, in executing all its projects, a lack of financial resources represented a serious problem for the organization. FAO had recently joined the Committee of International Development Institutions on the Environment (CIDIE) and looked forward to expanded co-operation with the other members of CIDIE and with UNEP in particular.

5. The Council Bureau met with the entire International Organizations Committee of the ILO (more than 150 participants) for a two-and-a-half hour session of questions and answers. The discussions centred around the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme; the process of awareness and preparedness for emergencies (i.e. industrial accidents) at local level (APELL); transfer of environment protection technology; the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS); chemicals and hazardous wastes; sustainable development; depletion of the ozone layer; the proposed United Nations centre for urgent environmental assistance; and the eight areas of concentration adopted by the Governing Council in its decision 15/1, section IV. There was agreement in principle that it would be useful to convene a second world industry conference on environmental management as part of the preparations for the 1992 Conference. There was general satisfaction with the co-operation between ILO and UNEP and in particular with UNEP's Industry and Environment Office.

6. At the IMO in London, the President of UNEP's Governing Council met with members of the Bureau of the IMO's Environmental Protection Committee. During the discussions, particular mention was made of the new revised strategy for the protection of the marine environment, adopted by IMO in August 1989, and the joint memorandum of understanding recently signed by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), IMO and UNEP on the possible establishment of centres to deal with oil and other spills at sea. The subjects of particular interest to the two organizations were the marine pollution component of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme; climate change; the impact of possible sea-level rise on drinking water and sanitation; pollution in rivers; and the harmonization of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the international legal instruments of IMO relating to the transport of hazardous goods.

7. At the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) the Bureau of UNEP's Governing Council met with the Bureau of the Industrial Development Board (IDB). At the suggestion of the Council Bureau, the IDB Bureau agreed that, within UNIDO's environmental programme, the environmental aspects of the issue of energy and the impact of environmental problems on poor people would be considered as priorities. The problem of the lack of adequate financial resources at the disposal of UNIDO was raised. Discussions further centred around sustainable development; the effect of environmental problems on the poor in different areas of the world; incorporating the environment into development planning; transfer of technology; and the strengthening of national and local mechanisms to address environmental issues. In view of the fact that UNIDO had become a specialized agency, the

two Bureaux agreed on the desirability of signing, at an early date, a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations as a basis for their future co-operation.

8. The visit to UNDP was arranged to coincide with the UNDP Governing Council session in Geneva and a meeting was held with the Bureau of the UNDP Governing Council. Of particular interest were the negotiations between UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank to establish a Global Environmental Facility that would provide additional funding to developing countries to permit them to deal effectively with the urgent environmental problems they face. The very important co-operation between UNEP and UNDP at the country level was stressed and UNDP promised to continue to provide representation for UNEP in all countries in which UNEP was not directly represented. Further discussions concentrated on the impact of environmental problems on the poor; sustainable development; incorporation of environmental considerations into development planning; transfer of technology; and strengthening of national and local mechanisms to address environmental issues.

9. The Governing Council Bureau held a meeting with the Bureau of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), in which some members of the WMO Executive Council also participated. The main subjects for discussion were protection of the ozone layer; climate change, including the work of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and work towards a framework convention on climate change; transboundary air pollution; a possible United Nations centre for urgent environmental assistance and the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme. The co-operation between UNEP and WMO is governed by two memoranda of understanding - one on IPCC, the other on the ozone layer. It was agreed that the two organizations had a major role to play in further negotiations on climate change, as well as in continuing to gather scientific data to assist in the negotiations. It was felt that climate change would also be of major importance for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

10. The Council Bureau met with the Bureau of Unesco's Executive Board in Paris. Co-operation between UNEP and Unesco is based on a memorandum of understanding signed in 1987 (see UNEP/GC.14/Inf.3 of 7 May 1987) and activities carried out under this memorandum were central to the discussions, which covered, inter alia, climate change; protection of the ozone layer; transboundary air pollution; freshwater resources; oceans; biological diversity and biotechnology; hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals; and protection of human health conditions and quality of life. The good co-operation between UNEP and Unesco was emphasized, in particular in the context of the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP); oceans, where UNEP participates actively in UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC); biological diversity, within the Ecosystems Conservation Group (ECG); the microbiological centres (MIRCENS); the development of the Second World Conservation Strategy; and the Working Group on Biotechnology Safety and in biosphere reserves. Discussions also centered on the second special session of the Governing Council, the designated officials on environmental matters (DOEM) and the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Particular emphasis was placed on the linkages between environment and development and on the need for sustainable development.